

WILLINGHAM BUCKINGHAM LEIALOHA

# FABLES

VERTIGO

#88 Nov 09

suggested for  
mature readers  
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Bill Willingham:  
writer/creator  
Mark Buckingham:  
penciller  
Steve Leialoha:  
inker p. 1-5, 10-22  
Andrew Pepoy:  
inker p. 6-9  
Lee Loughridge:  
colors  
Todd Klein: letters  
Joao Ruas: cover  
Angela Rufino:  
associate editor  
Shelly Bond: editor

THE FARM.

TODAY.

THE RAIN  
SEEMS TO BE  
LETTING UP.

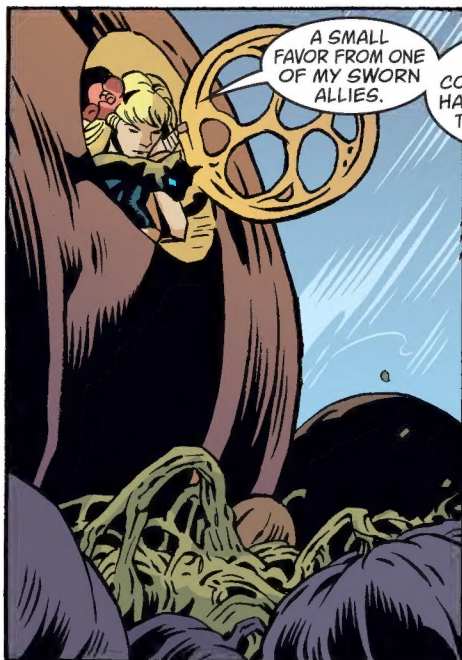
FINALLY.

# TOTENKINDER

## CHAPTER TWO OF WITCHES

IF YOU'RE  
TIRED OF BEING  
COOPED UP IN A SMALL  
HOUSE FOR SEVERAL  
DAYS, MADDY, I  
SUGGEST YOU GO  
FOR A NICE LONG  
WALK.

I KNOW  
THAT TONE OF VOICE.  
I TAKE IT YOU'VE A PARTICULAR  
**DESTINATION** IN MIND  
FOR ME?



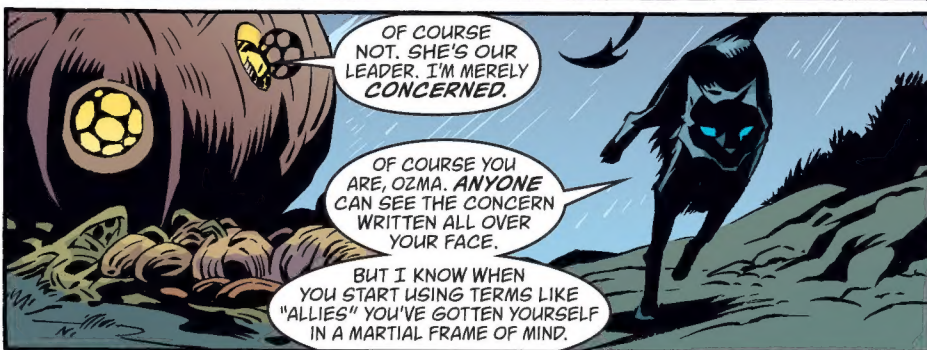
A SMALL FAVOR FROM ONE OF MY SWORN ALLIES.

I'M CURIOUS TO SEE WHERE OUR DEAR COLLEAGUE **TOTENKINDER** HAS BEEN KEEPING HERSELF THESE PAST FEW DAYS OF CONSTANT RAIN.

SINCE SHE HASN'T SOUGHT SHELTER **HERE**.



GROWING SUSPICIOUS?



OF COURSE NOT. SHE'S OUR LEADER. I'M MERELY CONCERNED.

OF COURSE YOU ARE, OZMA. ANYONE CAN SEE THE CONCERN WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.

BUT I KNOW WHEN YOU START USING TERMS LIKE "ALLIES" YOU'VE GOTTEN YOURSELF IN A MARTIAL FRAME OF MIND.



ANY FOOL CAN SEE THERE'S A SHOW-DOWN BUILDING UP, AND I'VE NO INTENTION OF GETTING BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU WHEN IT HAPPENS.

HEY, WHO'YA TALKING TO? WAS IT **ME**? DID YOU WANT TO ASK ME SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE SOMETHING I WOULD KNOW?



I DON'T THINK I KNOW YOU! ARE YOU A NEW FABLE CAT AT THE FARM? DID YOU FALL DOWN OUT OF THE SKY WHEN IT WAS RAINING CATS AND DOGS? DO YOU WANT TO PLAY?

I KNOW! WE COULD PLAY DOGS AND CATS! I'LL BE THE DOG AND YOU BE THE CAT, OKAY?



SCAT, PUPPY!

YIPE!



YIP! YIP!  
YIP!

SO WHERE ARE YOU, FRAU TOTENKINDER?

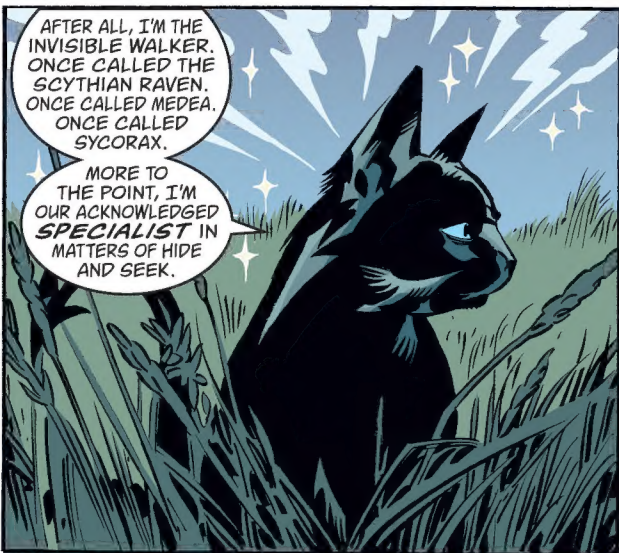
MY SIMPLE LOCATOR CANTRIP RETURNS UNBLEMISHED.

INTRIGUING.



WHAT COULD YOU BE UP TO THAT YOU'D TAKE PAINS TO MASK YOUR ACTIVITIES FROM YOUR OWN KIND?

TRY TO HIDE FROM ME AND ALL YOU DO IS PRESENT AN IRRESISTIBLE CHALLENGE.



AFTER ALL, I'M THE INVISIBLE WALKER. ONCE CALLED THE SCYTHIAN RAVEN. ONCE CALLED MEDEA. ONCE CALLED SYCORAX.

MORE TO THE POINT, I'M OUR ACKNOWLEDGED SPECIALIST IN MATTERS OF HIDE AND SEEK.



AND LOOK AT THAT. MY STRONGER WORKING HAS FOUND YOU.

WHATEVER CAN YOU BE UP TO IN THE DARKEST PART OF THE FOREST, TOTENKINDER?

MANY DAYS AGO...

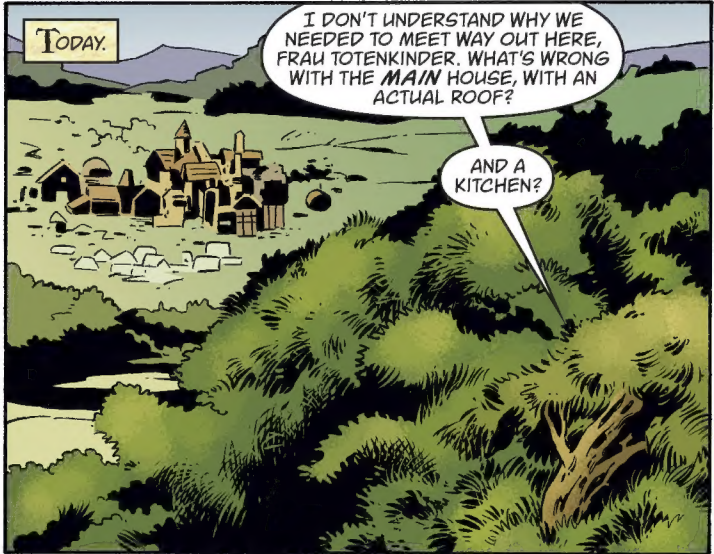
RAGE!

RAGE AT ME, YOU FOUL SPIRITS AND BEASTS!

HOWL AND GROWL THOUGH YOU MIGHT, THUNDER AT ME WITH FANG AND CLAW AND DIVERSE MAGICS--STILL YOU FALL SHORT, BREAKING AGAINST ME LIKE WAVES AGAINST THE ROCKS!

KNEEL DOWN! SERVE ME OR DIE! THAT'S YOUR ONLY CHOICE!

B



TODAY.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE NEEDED TO MEET WAY OUT HERE, FRAU TOTENKINDER. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE MAIN HOUSE, WITH AN ACTUAL ROOF?

AND A KITCHEN?



BECAUSE I AM ABOUT TO INITIATE A POWERFUL WORKING, KING COLE, AND EMBARK ON A GREAT JOURNEY.

SUCH TALES THE MUNDYS WILL SPIN FROM THIS. HOW WONDERFUL THE WAY THEY ABSORB OUR STORIES.



FINE, SURE, BUT...UH--YOU DIDN'T ANSWER MY--

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE NEED TO BE SO DEEP IN--Y'KNOW--OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE! A MAN COULD GET LOST FOR MONTHS!

I'M HERE BECAUSE ALL FAIRY TALES TAKE PLACE IN THE WOODS, KING COLE, EVEN THOSE THAT DON'T.



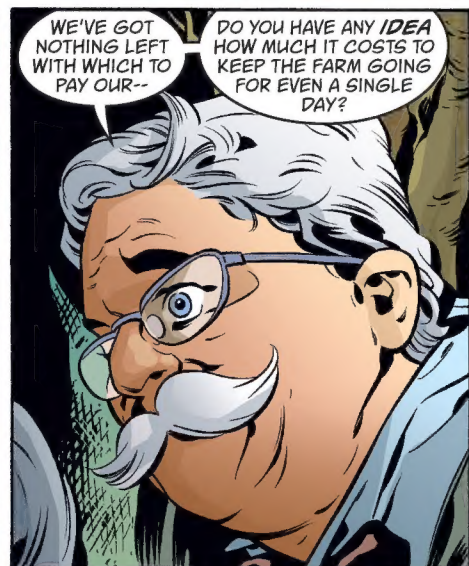
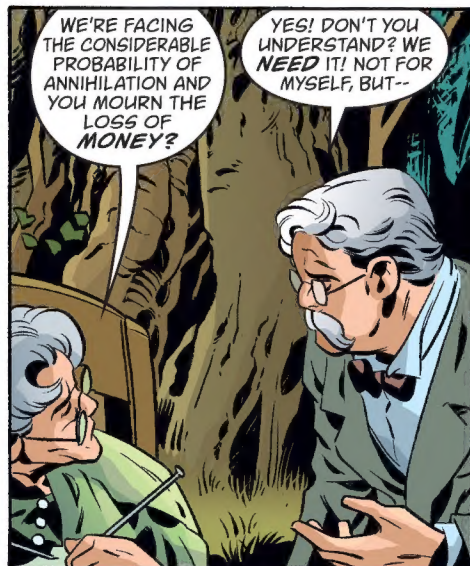
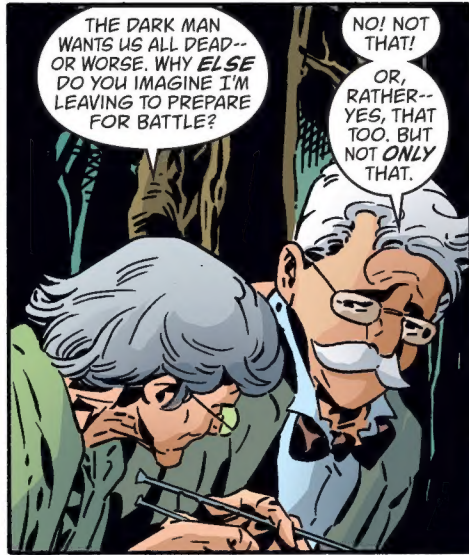
CERTAIN THINGS REQUIRE THE BROODING DARK OF A PLACE UNKNOWN.

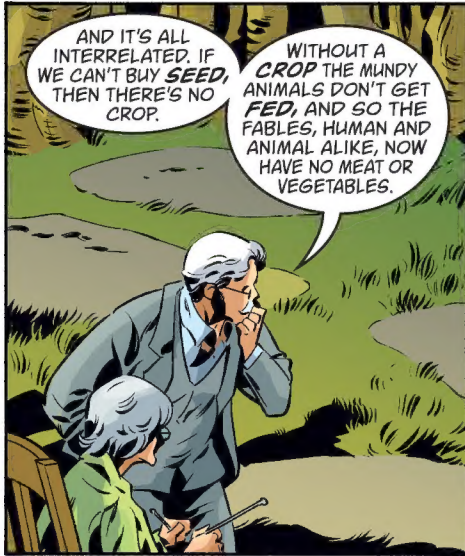
AND LET ME CORRECT YOUR MISUNDERSTANDING. WE DON'T NEED TO BE OUT HERE. ONLY I DO. GO HOME, IF YOU WANT TO.



SO, GO ON. SPEAK YOUR MIND.

I'VE INDULGED YOUR INTRUSION ONLY BECAUSE YOU SEEMED SO DESPERATE TO TALK TO ME BEFORE I WENT INTO SECLUSION.





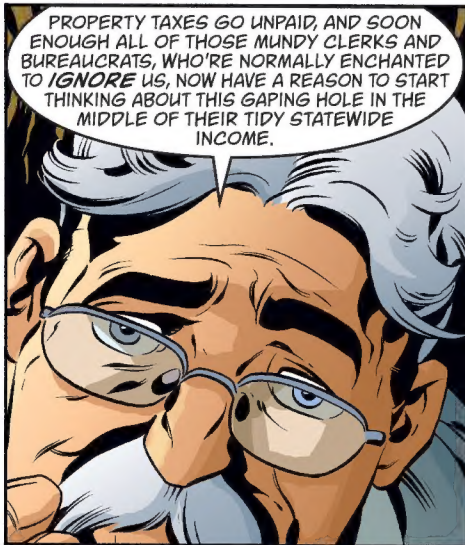
AND IT'S ALL INTERRELATED. IF WE CAN'T BUY **SEED**, THEN THERE'S NO CROP.

WITHOUT A **CROP** THE MUNDY ANIMALS DON'T GET **FED**, AND SO THE FABLES, HUMAN AND ANIMAL ALIKE, NOW HAVE NO MEAT OR VEGETABLES.



IN THE MEANTIME THE POWER BILL GOES UNPAID, SO EVERYTHING GRINDS TO A HALT.

GAS CAN'T BE PURCHASED, SO THE TRACTORS AND THE COMBINES BECOME EXPENSIVE **LAWN ORNAMENTS**.



PROPERTY TAXES GO UNPAID, AND SOON ENOUGH ALL OF THOSE MUNDY CLERKS AND BUREAUCRATS, WHO'RE NORMALLY ENCHANTED TO **IGNORE** US, NOW HAVE A REASON TO START THINKING ABOUT THIS GAPING HOLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR TIDY STATEWIDE INCOME.



AND THEN THE **SPELLS** KEEPING THEM DISINTERESTED OVERLOAD AND WE'RE EXPOSED. NAKED!

IF WE CAN'T START PAYING SOME **BILLS** SOON, WE WON'T **NEED** THE DARK MAN TO CAUSE THE RUIN OF US ALL.

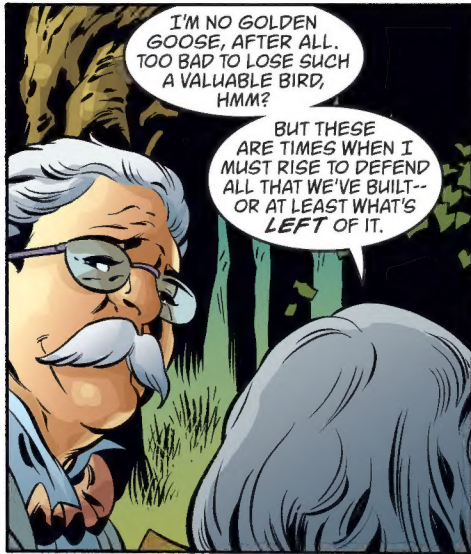


TAKE A **BREATH**, YOUR HONOR. YOU'VE MADE YOUR CASE. WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS, EH?



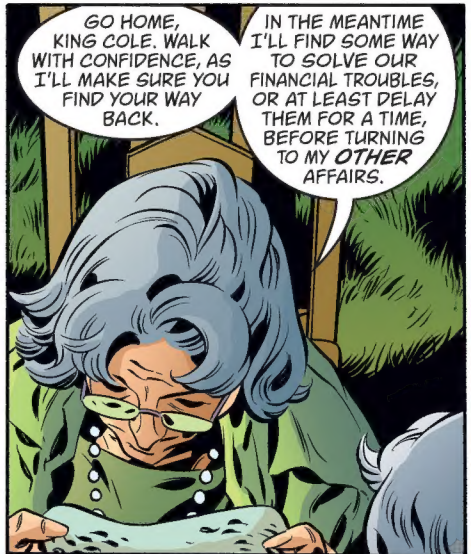
CONJURING GOLD FROM THIN AIR IS BEYOND EVEN **MY** POWERS. IT'S POSSIBLE, BUT ALWAYS COSTS MORE THAN IT YIELDS.





I'M NO GOLDEN GOOSE, AFTER ALL. TOO BAD TO LOSE SUCH A VALUABLE BIRD, HMM?

BUT THESE ARE TIMES WHEN I MUST RISE TO DEFEND ALL THAT WE'VE BUILT-- OR AT LEAST WHAT'S LEFT OF IT.



GO HOME, KING COLE. WALK WITH CONFIDENCE, AS I'LL MAKE SURE YOU FIND YOUR WAY BACK.

IN THE MEANTIME I'LL FIND SOME WAY TO SOLVE OUR FINANCIAL TROUBLES, OR AT LEAST DELAY THEM FOR A TIME, BEFORE TURNING TO MY OTHER AFFAIRS.



OH, AND BE A DEAR. TAKE THIS WITH YOU. IT'S A GIFT FOR OUR SHERIFF AND HIS LOVELY BRIDE.

I'M FINALLY DONE WITH IT. AT LONG LAST IT'S JUST RIGHT. AND THAT MEANS I'M FINALLY DONE WITH ALL KNITTING-- FOR THIS AGE AT LEAST.



RUN ALONG NOW, YOUR HONOR. I MUST BE ABOUT MY PRIVATE BUSINESS, AND THERE ARE THINGS THAT YOU AND YOUR KIND SHOULD NEVER SEE.

DON'T YOU AGREE?



TAKE MIND OF WHAT YOU WITNESSED ON THE ROOFTOP YEARS AGO AND WISHED YOU HADN'T.

MANY DAYS AGO...



TSK-  
TSK-

TUT-  
TUT-

WHAT A LONG,  
TROUBLESOME DAY  
IT'S BEEN.



AND  
NOT DONE  
YET.



NO, NEVER  
FINISHED.



NOT UNTIL  
THE CLEANING'S  
DONE AND OUR  
SUPPER'S  
COOKED.





TODAY.

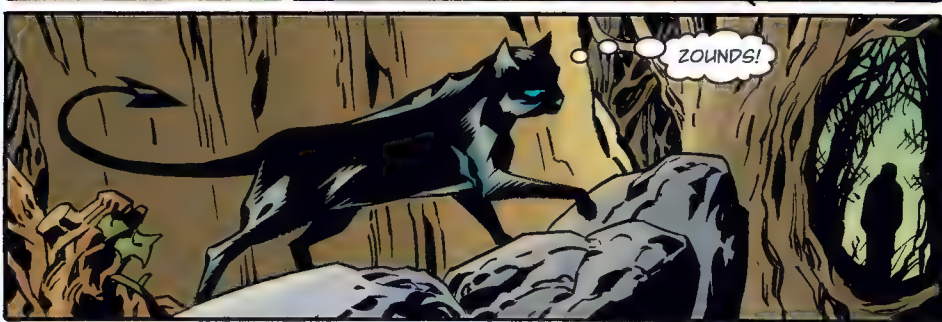
THIS CAN'T BODE WELL.

NOT WELL AT ALL.



CURIOUS.

WHAT COULD OUR NOBLE MAYOR BE UP TO, SO FAR OFF THE BEATEN TRACK?



ZOUNDS!



TEACH THEM A THING OR TWO.

GEPPETTO, TOO?



A FOREST OF WEIRDS AND WONDERS!

ODDITIES APLENTY!

A TWISTY STRETCH OF FOREST TRAIL AWAY...

ALONE AT LAST, WE BEGIN OUR WORK.

OZMA WAS RIGHT. IT'S A TIME FOR ENDING. A TIME FOR DRAMATIC AND TERRIBLE CHANGE.



MY WEAPONS.



AFTER LONG AGES, I SPEAK YOUR NAMES TO YOU ONCE MORE.

HUNGER AND JUDGMENT.



ONCE AGAIN YOU WILL CUT MY DESIRES INTO THE HIDDEN HEARTS OF EVERY WORLD.

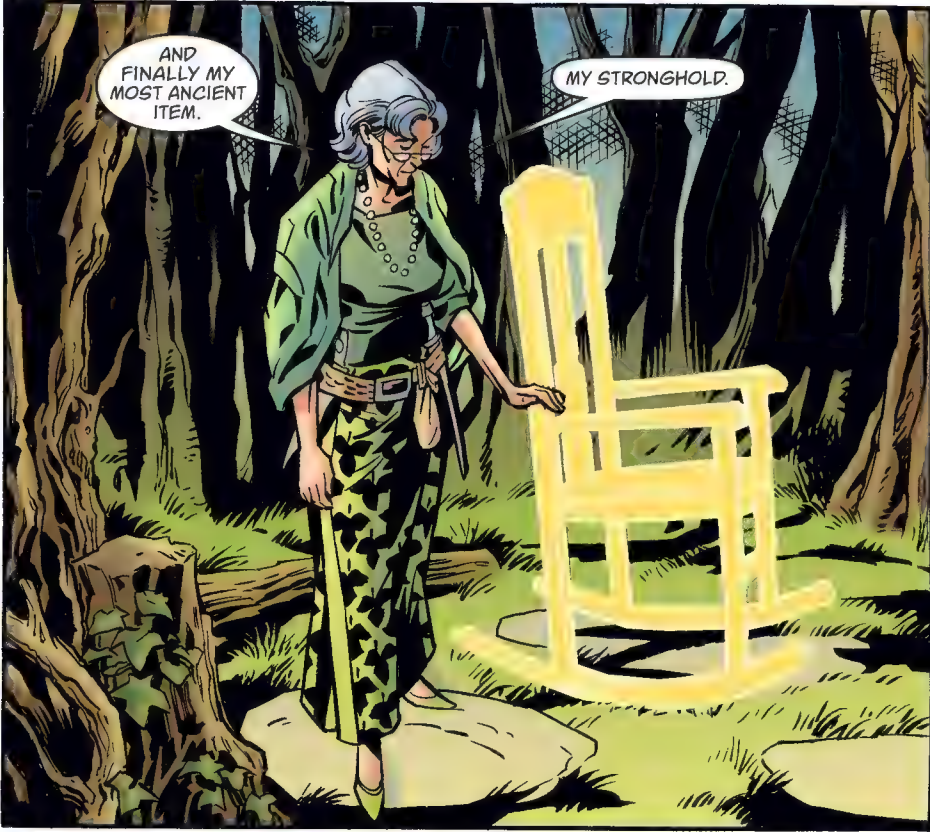


MY BAG OF TRICKS.



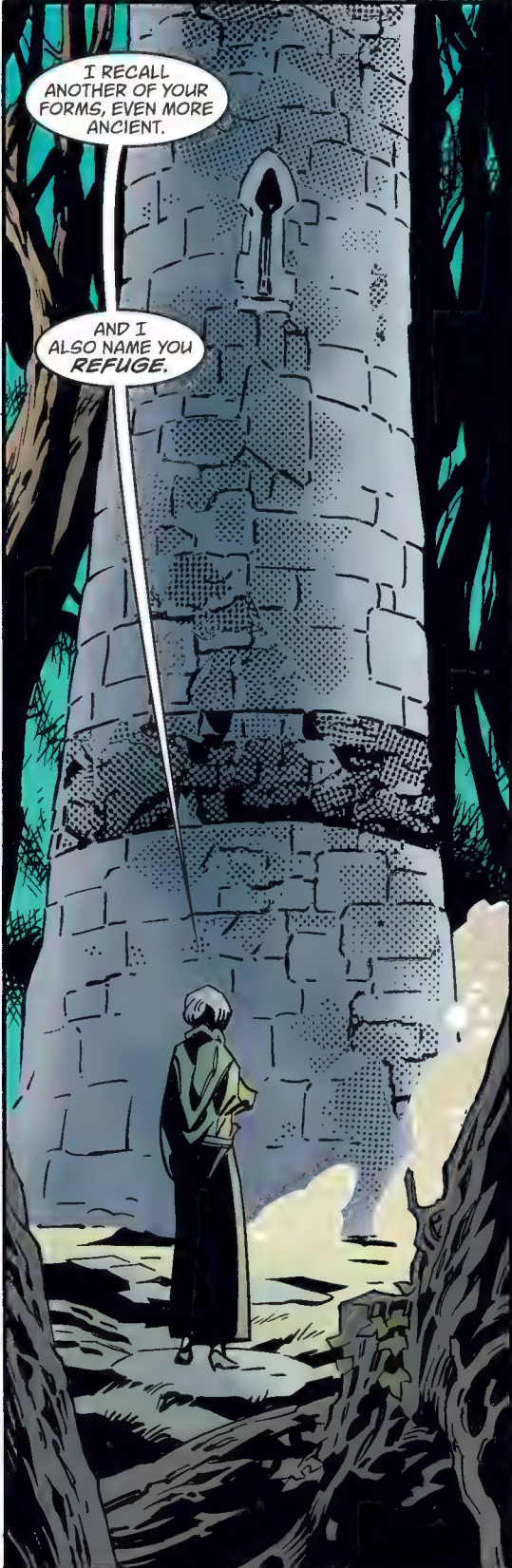
I NAME YOU **PATHFINDER**, AND CALL ON YOUR GUIDANCE ONCE MORE, TO ALWAYS AND EVER ENLARGE ME IN WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING.

AND FINALLY MY MOST ANCIENT ITEM.



MY STRONGHOLD.





I RECALL  
ANOTHER OF YOUR  
FORMS, EVEN MORE  
ANCIENT.

AND I  
ALSO NAME YOU  
*REFUGE.*




AND FINALLY I  
RECALL YOUR OLDEST  
SHAPE--THE ALTAR STONE  
ON WHICH I FIRST  
SACRIFICED THE LIFE  
OF MY OWN CHILD.

AND I NAME  
YOU BY YOUR FIRST  
NAMES.



*DAMNATION.*



AND *REGRET.*



AND BURDEN.



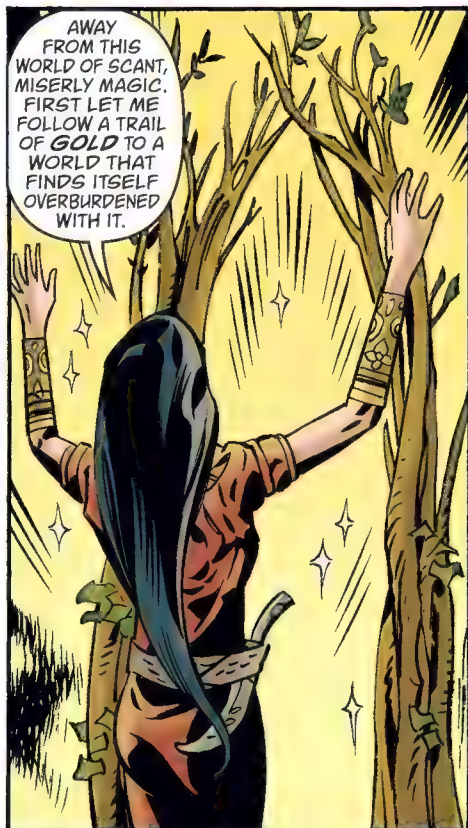
SO MANY NAMES.



FOR SO TERRIBLE AN ENGINE.



AND NOW IT'S TIME TO GO.



AWAY FROM THIS WORLD OF SCANT, MISERLY MAGIC. FIRST LET ME FOLLOW A TRAIL OF GOLD TO A WORLD THAT FINDS ITSELF OVERBURDENED WITH IT.





TIME TO SAY  
GOODBYE TO LONG  
YEARS OF KNITTING  
AND SERVICE.

TIME ONCE  
AGAIN TO WAKE THE  
MORE ALARMING  
ASPECTS.

THE  
UNRAVELING.



MANY DAYS AGO...

I'VE DEFEATED EVERY OTHER JINNI, IFRIT, AND BOTTLE DEMON, AND DINED ON THEIR GUTS AND SINEWS.

CHEWED THEIR BONES AND SUCKED THE MARROW.

AH, LITTLE WITCH, BUT THOUGH THEY WERE OF MY KIND, THEY WEREN'T THE SAME AS ME--A PURE AND TRUE D'JINN IN THE FULLNESS OF POWER.

THEY RESEMBLED ME IN THE WAY A NEWBORN RESEMBLES THE GROWN MAN. THE SAME, AFTER A FASHION, AND YET VASTLY DEFICIENT IN STRENGTH AND CUNNING.

TRY TO BATTLE ME AND YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF EMBROILED IN A FAR DEADLIER CONTEST.

STILL, I HAVE NO QUARREL WITH YOU. I'M CONTENT TO GO MY OWN WAY AND LET YOU GO YOURS, UNMOLESTED.

AS LONG AS YOU DON'T INTERFERE, I WON'T TRY TO IMPEDE YOU. I'VE MANY REVENGES YET TO TAKE, AND YOU AREN'T NUMBERED AMONG MY ENEMIES.

THEN I BELIEVE WE'VE REACHED AN ACCORD.

NOT SO FAST, MONSTERS!

I'M NOT DONE WITH YOU YET!



YOU'VE WRECKED MY HOME AND SCARED MY NEIGHBORS, AND I WON'T HAVE IT!

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR DOOM AT THE HANDS OF BUFKIN THE BRAVE!



HEH.



HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH!

HA HA HA HA HA HA!  
HA HA!



HEH-HEH-HEE-HEE-HEE  
HEE-HEE!

HA HA HA HA HAAA  
HA HA HA HA HAH!



STOP THAT!  
STOP IT THIS INSTANT!

I--

I REALLY MEAN IT!

I'M BEGINNING TO GET MAD!





THE FARM.

TODAY.

BEAUTY?



I'VE SENT CLARA TO LOOK FOR HER. SHE SHOULD BE ALONG AT ANY MOMENT.



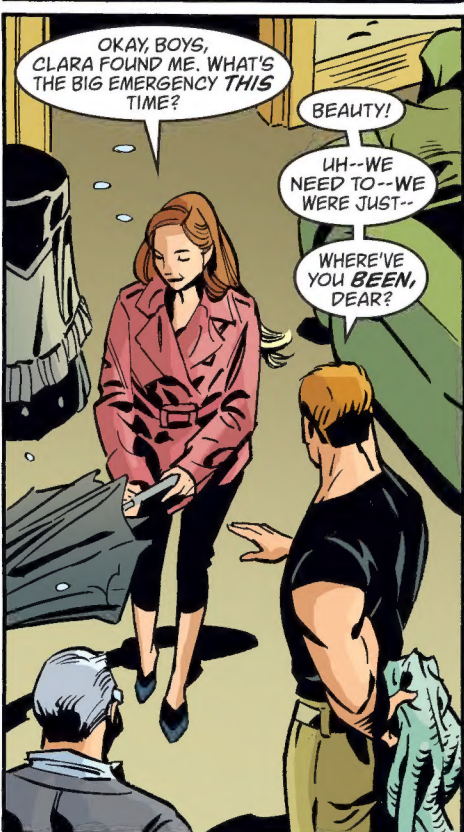
BUT I HAVE TO AGREE WITH YOU, KING COLE. THIS IS DISTURBING.

WHEN THE WITCH SHOWED THIS TO US, MONTHS AGO, WE JUST ASSUMED SHE WAS PLAYING A JOKE AT OUR EXPENSE.



I'VE NEVER KNOWN FRAU TOTENKINDER TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR.

TRUE. SHE'S CERTAINLY SHOWN ME NO SIGN OF ONE.



OKAY, BOYS, CLARA FOUND ME. WHAT'S THE BIG EMERGENCY *THIS* TIME?

BEAUTY!

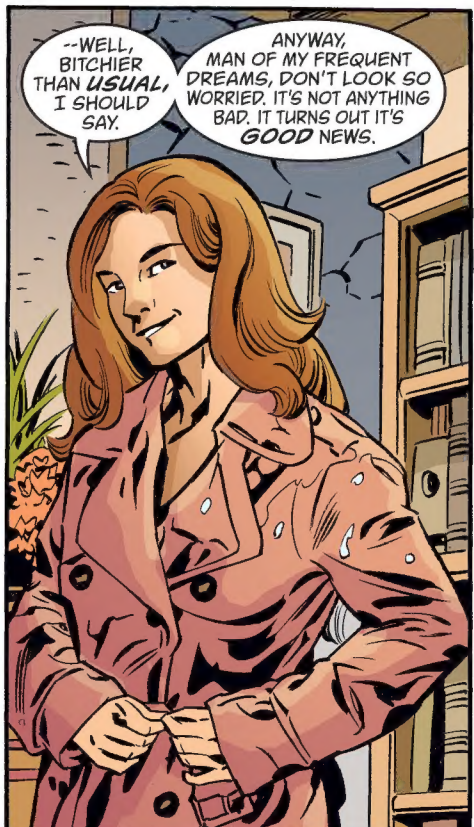
UH--WE NEED TO--WE WERE JUST--

WHERE'VE YOU *BEEN*, DEAR?



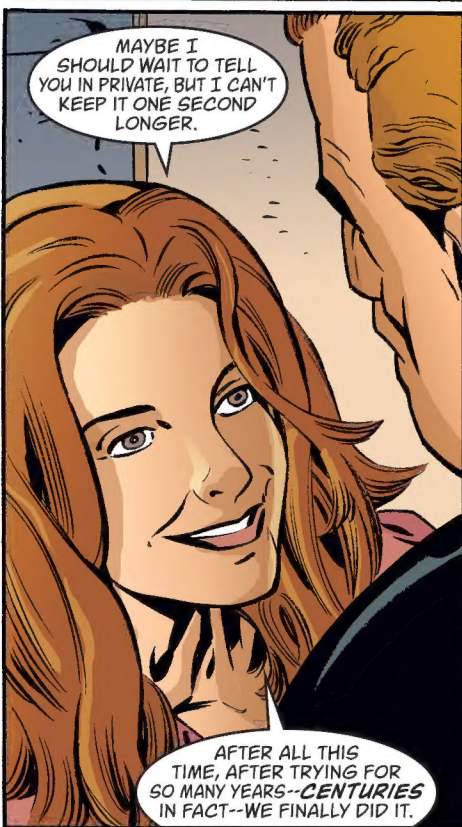
I'VE BEEN TO SEE DOCTOR SWINEHEART.

I WAS WONDERING WHY I HAVEN'T FELT WELL THESE PAST FEW DAYS-- UNABLE TO GET ANY WORK DONE. LIGHT-HEADED, AND BITCHY--



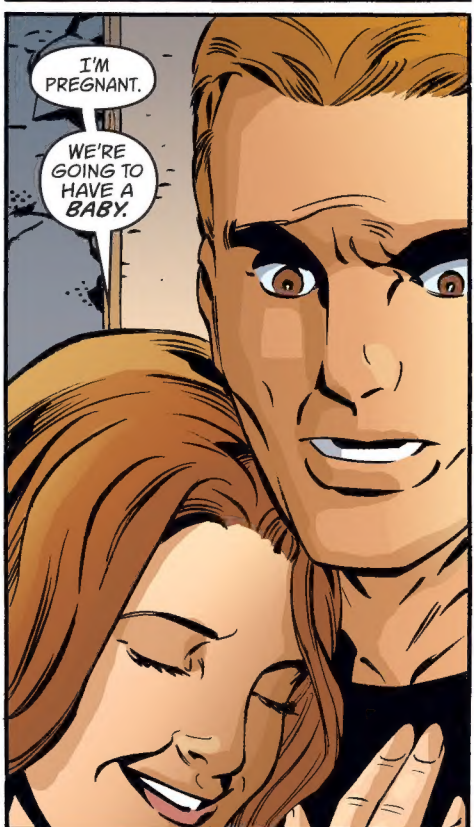
--WELL, BITCHIER THAN *USUAL*, I SHOULD SAY.

ANYWAY, MAN OF MY FREQUENT DREAMS, DON'T LOOK SO WORRIED. IT'S NOT ANYTHING BAD. IT TURNS OUT IT'S *GOOD NEWS*.



MAYBE I SHOULD WAIT TO TELL YOU IN PRIVATE, BUT I CAN'T KEEP IT ONE SECOND LONGER.

AFTER ALL THIS TIME, AFTER TRYING FOR SO MANY YEARS--*CENTURIES* IN FACT--WE FINALLY DID IT.



I'M PREGNANT.

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A *BABY*.

NEXT: OH HAPPY DAY! (OR NOT.)

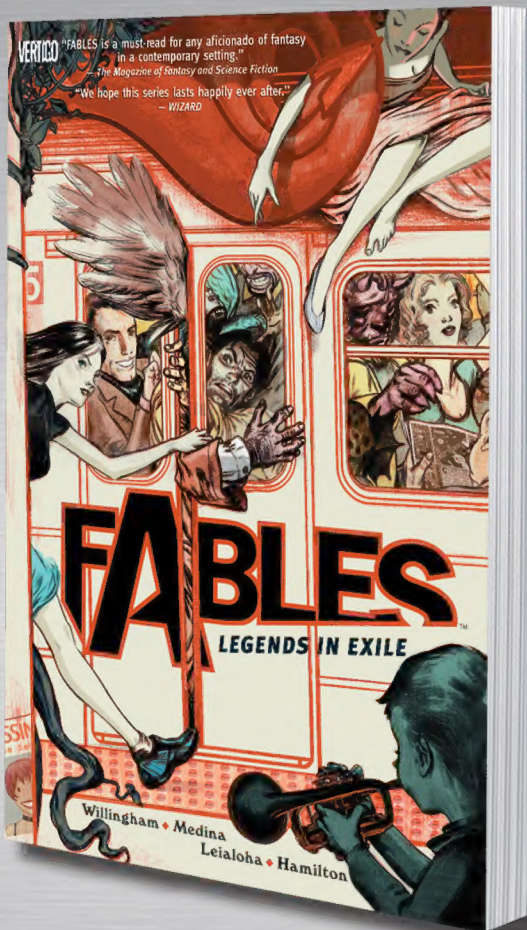
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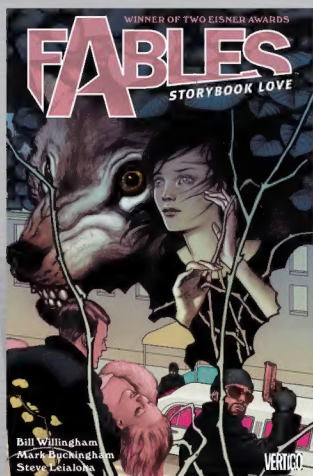
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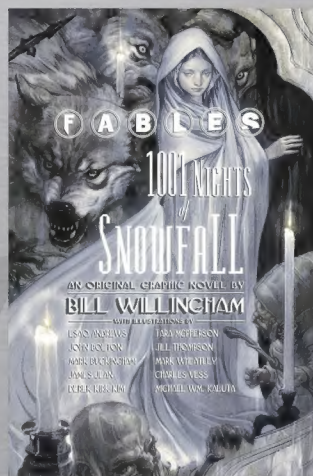
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